

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 4161

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SOCI, PFOR, CI, US

SUBJECT: ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL

REF: STATE 150570

1. SUMMARY: FATHER HESBURGH SAW PINOCHET JULY 14 AND OBTAINED FROM HIM PLEDGE THAT ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL WOULD NOT BE BOUGHT BY GOC. PROSPECTS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOLUTION OF SCHOOL PROBLEM APPRECIABLY ENHANCED. END SUMMARY.

2. FATHER THEODORE HESBURGH LEAVES SANTIAGO EARLY JULY 16 AFTER BUSY THREE-DAY STAY LARGELY DEVOTED TO PROBLEMS OF ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL. AFTER CONFERRING AT LENGTH, IN SEPARATE MEETINGS, WITH CARDINAL SILVA, ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVES, AND AMBASSADOR, HESBURGH HAD TALK NOON JULY 14 WITH CHIEF OF STATE GENERAL AUGUSTO PINOCHET AT LATTER'S HOME. HE SUMMARIZED RESULTS FOR AMBASSADOR AT JULY 15 MEETING AS FOLLOWS.

3. MEETING WAS CORDIAL, HESBURGH SAID. RECALLING HIS LONG AND SYMPATHETIC RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILE OVER THE YEARS, HESBURGH EXPLAINED WHY IT WOULD BE GRAVE ERROR

FOR GOC TO PURSUE IDEA OF FORCED PURCHASE OF ST. GEORGE'S
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SCHOOL. NOTED THAT PRIESTS WHOSE ACTIVITIES HAD LED

TO CONTROVERSIES WITH GOC WERE NO LONGER IN COUNTRY, AND THAT HOLY CROSS ORDER WAS PREPARED TO SEND NEW RECTOR AND OTHER PRIESTS TO REPLACE THOSE WHO HAD DEPARTED. CITED BENEFITS BROUGHT TO COUNTRY BY HOLY CROSS FATHERS DURING THIRTY-YEAR HISTORY OF SCHOOL. REMARKED THAT IF HOLY CROSS COULD OPERATE SCHOOLS IN SUCH UNLIKELY AREAS AS BANGLADESH AND UGANDA, WORLD WOULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY IT NOT POSSIBLE TO DO SO IN A CATHOLIC COUNTRY LIKE CHILE.

4. CONTINUING, HESBURGH STRESSED EXTREMELY SERIOUS EFFECT ON CHILEAN RELATIONS WITH US, ESPECIALLY AS REGARDS OPPOSITION TO US ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS, IF WORBZ# WERE DISSEMINATED AS REGARDING ST. GEORGE'S PROBLEM. ADDED THAT UNDER CANON LAW CONGREGATION COULD NOT SELL ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL WITHOUT PRIOR VATICAN APPROVAL, WHICH VATICAN WOULD NOT GIVE; IF SCHOOL WERE EXPROPRIATED, ASSURED PINOCHET CARDINAL SILVA WOULD PROVIDE ANOTHER FOR HOLY CROSS USE. CLOSED WITH STATEMENT TO GOC THAT HOLY CROSS ORDER HAD TRIED TO INCULCATE PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AT SCHOOL, INTENDED TO CONTINUE DOING SO, AND ASSUMED THAT NEW CHILEAN GOVERNMENT, WHICH WAS GUIDED BY HUMANISTIC MOTIVES, WOULD WELCOME THIS APPROACH. (POINT AT ISSUE HERE IS CONTINUING AVAILABILITY OF SCHOLARSHIPS AT ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN OF PARENTS FROM LOWER INCOME GROUPS.)

5. HESBURGH SAID PINOCHET WAS NOT DEFENSIVE ABOUT CHILE'S POSITION ON HUMAN RIGHTS GENERALLY OR ON ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL, BUT HE DID GIVE ASSURANCE THAT "THE SCHOOL WILL NOT BE SOLD OR BOUGHT." THE TWO SHOOK HANDS ON THAT STATEMENT. HESBURGH LEAVES COUNTRY IN OPTIMISTIC FRAME OF MIND, THOUGH HE RECOGNIZES THAT FOLLOW-THROUGH BY PRESIDENT CANNOT BE GUARANTEED AND THAT BECAUSE EDUCATION MINISTER CASTRO IS AN ADMIRAL, INTER-SERVICE RIVALRIES MAY YET PREVENT A SATISFACTORY SETTLEMENT OF PROBLEM.

6. HESBURGH TOLD PINOCHET THAT FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD BE CARRIED ON BY HOLY CROSS REPRESENTATIVES IN CONFIDENTIAL

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SANTIAGO, TOGETHER WITH LOCAL LAWYER IGNACIO WALKER. STATED THAT PROVINCIAL, FATHER WILLIAM LEUERS, WAS PREPARED TO COME TO CHILE AT ANY TIME, AND IF NECESSARY HESBURGH HIMSELF WOULD RETURN.

7. HESBURGH HAS ADVISED LOCAL HOLY CROSS FATHERS NOT TO RESPOND TO LETTER FROM EDUCATION MINISTER CASTRO (REFTEL). HAS ALSO ADVISED CARDINAL SILVA NOT TO WRITE.

8. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE FATHER HESBURGH HAS DONE EVERY-
THING POSSIBLE WITHIN SCOPE OF HIS BRIEF VISIT TO PUT
THIS MATTER ON THE RAILS. AS INDICATED ABOVE,
HOWEVER, THERE IS VERY APPRECIABLE CHANCE FOR
OBSTRUCTION BY HARD LINERS. TO MINIMIZE THIS,
WE WILL WHERE APPROPRIATE URGE GOC OFFICIALS TO
MOVE ALONG LINES OF HESBURGH-PINOCHET CONVERSATION.
MORNING JULY 15 I RAISED SUBJECT IN THESE TERMS WITH
UNDERSEC FOR FONAFFS COLLADOS; LATTER NOT FAMILIAR
WITH PROBLEM, BUT NOTED POINT.

9. WE WILL KEEP IN TOUCH WITH LOCAL HOLY CROSS
PERSONNEL AND ADVISE AS TO FURTHER PROGRESS.
POPPER

NOTE BY OC/T: # AS RECEIVED.

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